



Mr. David Maria Sassoli
President of the European Parliament
B-1047 Brussels

Oral health in Europe must not become collateral damage of COVID-19

Brussels, 15 April 2020

Dear President Sassoli,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of European Dentists (CED), representing over 340,000 practising dentists through 33 national dental associations and chambers from 31 European countries, to express our concerns about the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on oral healthcare and to ask for your support to ensure that European dentists and oral health in Europe do not become collateral damage of COVID-19.

Dentists across Europe have been on the front lines of the efforts to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus. As dental treatments create conditions that are potentially conducive to transmission, dentists have committed all their efforts and resources to still providing safe and high-quality treatment to their patients by complying with existing and even stricter new infection control protocols and by using appropriate protective equipment, notwithstanding dramatic shortages. Since the middle of March, an increasing number of restrictions have been imposed on daily work of dentists, ordering or recommending the closure or suspension of dental practices, or at the very least limiting dental care to emergency treatments only. In some Member States these restrictions were immediately put in place for many months while in others, governments have indicated that dental practices will be among the last to be allowed to return to normal operation as part of national exit strategies.

Beyond the immediate impact of the COVID-19 crisis, European dentistry faces a very real threat of collapse with catastrophic consequences for oral health of Europeans unless immediate and decisive action is taken to support dentists at national and European level. With the exception of a few countries, dental care across the EU is to a great extent provided by dentists working from private dental practices and it is particularly these dentists and their patients who are most at risk of falling through the cracks of current emergency response measures. Dentists working in individual and small private practices are faced with significant fixed running costs, including

Council of European Dentists

President Dr Marco Landi

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salaries of auxiliary dental personnel, rent and equipment costs, as well as personal pension and social contributions. Not only will they face difficulties to cover these costs during COVID-19 restrictions, the loss of income is expected to continue for the foreseeable future if, after the current outbreak recedes, patients are hesitant to seek dental treatment for fear of infection, even if these fears are unsubstantiated when appropriate preventive measures are implemented, including strict adherence to relevant infection control protocols and the use of personal protective equipment.

Unless immediate action is taken, numerous dental practices across Europe will be forced to close, reducing access to oral care for their patients and leading to a decline in the level of oral health. This will eventually result in worsening of public health because of greater burden from oral diseases, in additional pressure on already strained national health systems that will be forced to treat emergency dental cases, and also in reduced general health of Europeans.

We respectfully request your support in the name of European dentists and in the interest of European dental patients to help us safeguard the high standards, accessibility and continuity of dental care in the EU by:

- Ensuring that dental practices in all Member States have access to the necessary personal protective equipment and to other measures that will contribute to safety of dental treatments for both patients and dentists, such as COVID-19 testing as appropriate
- Calling on Member States to include dentists in general national emergency support instruments
- Encouraging Member States to develop income compensation and financial support measures aimed specifically at dentists
- Confirming to Member States the availability of funding provided through EU crisis response instruments, including flexible use of EU budget, SURE, ESM and EIB funding, Emergency Support grants and Recovery Fund, to support dentists, and verifying dentists' eligibility for all relevant support tools, including those prioritising SMEs and health care

We remain at your disposal for further information and look forward to your response at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Marco Landi
CED President